Wilson Ornithological Club

# AVICULTURAL MAGAZINE

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# THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY

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# THE AVICULTURAL MAGAZINE

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Lanceolated Jay.

# AVICULTURAL MAGAZINE

THE JOURNAL OF THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY
AND THE AVICULTURAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA

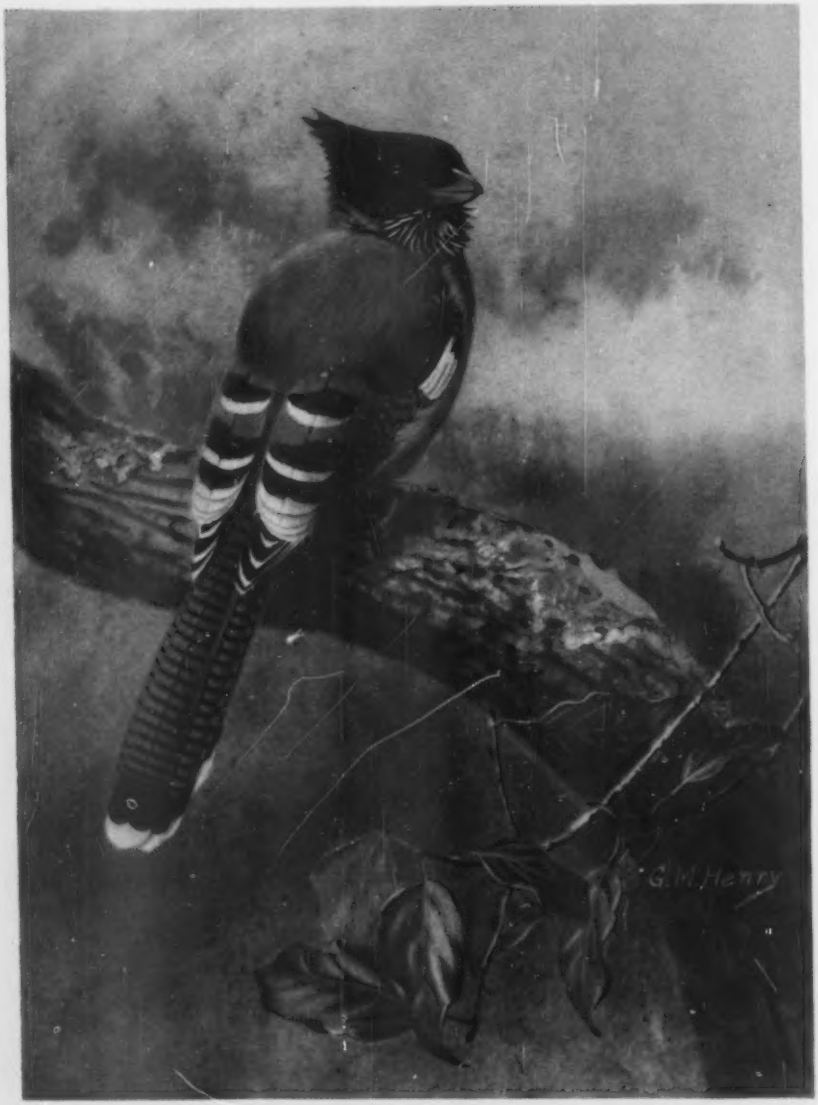
Vol. 64.—No. 2.—*All rights reserved.* MARCH–APRIL, 1958

## THE LANCEOLATED JAY

By DEREK GOODWIN (London, England)

The genus *Garrulus*—the typical jays—consists only of three species : our " Common " Jay which is found, in various races which differ a good deal in size and colouration, in suitable places throughout the palearctic regions from Ireland to Japan, the striking Purple Jay, *Garrulus lidthi*, of the Loo Choo Islands, and the present species, *Garrulus lanceolatus*, which is confined to the western Himalayan regions. Among a group of birds so beautiful in colour and so attractive in their graceful forms and sprightly movements, it would be invidious to make comparisons, but a glance at the coloured plate will show that this species can compare with any of its relatives. To my mind it is the most lovely of them all, but that is merely a personal bias and no reflection on either *glandarius* or *lidthi*.

So far as one can glean from books on Indian birds, in which it is usually given the most misleading vernacular name of Black-throated Jay (in the living bird the throat appears more white than black, even when the black-based, white-tipped, lanceolate throat feathers are erected), the habits and ecology of this bird are very similar to those of our own Jay. Since, however, both species occur together in parts of north-west India, it seems unlikely that their requirements in the wild can be identical, even though in captivity they will both thrive under the same regime. The Lanceolated Jay frequents open forests and scrub-covered hillsides where there are scattered trees and human dwellings (Ali, 1949). The nest which is built of twigs lined with roots and fibres, like that of our Jay except that grass stems are sometimes incorporated in it, is placed usually in a small tree standing alone or with others in comparatively open country (Stuart Baker, 1932). It is said never to nest in conifers—even where these are in a majority—or in dense forest. This may well be the case, but I think there is room for doubt until such time as someone makes a thorough study of the species in the wild. It may be the same as with our own Jay. This latter also often nests conspicuously near the tops of

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saplings, but it equally often builds well hidden in conifers, honeysuckle or rhododendron, as becomes apparent if one takes an area of woodland and searches it yard by yard to find every Jay's nest therein. If, however, one merely seeks to find the greatest number of Jays' nests in a given time, then, of course, one finds far more of the conspicuous sapling nests.

Beyond the fact that it takes acorns, fruit, insects, and scraps of human food from around houses, little has been recorded of the Lanceolated Jay's feeding habits. In captivity its food preferences are similar to those of our Jay (Goodwin, 1953). It has exactly the same habit of burying and hiding acorns and other food, and it is probable that in a wild state in winter it subsists largely on acorns buried the previous autumn, as does our Jay. I have enthused in previous articles on its attractiveness as an aviary bird, so will not touch further on the subject except to say that few species can be more recommended for a large, garden aviary. It is hardy (though like other corvids liable to gape-worm infestation from which, however, some individuals seem immune), easily fed, lively, and beautiful. Its only drawbacks are that it is as destructive to eggs and nestlings as most captive corvids, though I have kept it with adult Barbary Doves without the latter receiving any harm. In the early Spring of 1957, I liberated a pair, hoping that they would stay in the neighbourhood and enable me to study them at liberty. This they did not do, but one of them survived for a further nine months until—some thirty miles away—it was shot by a sportsman. The fate of most tame or conspicuous birds that are allowed full liberty.

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# FLIGHTLESS MOORHENS (*PORPHYRIORNIS C. COMERI*) FROM GOUGH ISLAND BREED IN CAPTIVITY

By A. E. WILSON and M. K. SWALES (Cambridge University Department of Zoology ; Field Station for the Study of Animal Behaviour, Madingley. (Cambridge, England)

Flightless Moorhens (*Porphyriornis c. comeri*) have recently been bred for the first time in captivity. These birds, which occur only on Gough Island in the South Atlantic, somewhat resemble British Moorhens in appearance. Several live pairs of them were brought back to this country in May, 1956, by the Gough Island Scientific Survey in the hope that they would breed, because the eggs of the species had never previously been seen. The species is extremely shy and secretive in the wild state, and all attempts to find nests containing eggs on Gough Island had failed.

One pair of those brought back to this country was sent to Madingley where it was thought it would stand the best possible chance of breeding in captivity. This particular pair had already been in captivity about nine months by the time it reached Madingley, and had already become remarkably tame. This in itself was interesting in view of the bird's shyness in the wild. The two birds were kept in an aviary measuring 8 feet by 20 feet by 8 feet, in which was plenty of cover, made by sandwiching spruce and box leaves between wire netting.

The birds were fed on an insectile mixture, supplemented with boiled rice or boiled potatoes mixed with meat gravy. Mealworms and gentles were also offered each day together with green food (chickweed and lettuce).

In March, 1957, they started nest-building. The first nest was built on the ground ; but this site was soon abandoned in favour of one 2 ft. 6 in. above the ground. The two birds made a cup-shaped nest measuring about seven inches in diameter and composed of straw and dried grass. During building the female, while standing near the nest site, would call to the male with a loud " krak-krrak ". The male immediately searched for nesting material and, picking up two or three straws, would run to the female. She would then back away into cover, bowing to the male and appearing to indicate where the material was to be placed. The male would then leave to collect more material. If the male's attention was distracted (e.g. by mealworms being placed in the aviary) the female would become impatient and call to the male more vigorously.

Copulation was observed on several occasions. When mealworms

or gentles were placed in the aviary, the male would call to the female from cover and, collecting a number of insects in his bill, would feed them to her. Both birds called with low clucking calls, and the female would then walk slowly away. The male walked slowly alongside her, brushing his body against hers. The female exposed her white tail feathers, tilting her tail towards the male, and continued calling with low clucking calls. The female would then bow away from the male and place the point of her bill on the ground, then the male would mount with wings outspread. After copulation, the male fluttered off over the head of the female.

The first egg was laid on 4th April, 1957. There were two eggs in this first clutch, but both were infertile. The second clutch contained four eggs of which two hatched. The first chick died after two days ; the second was hand-reared and lived for seven days. The two remaining eggs were infertile. Six eggs were laid in the third clutch : two were infertile, one chick hatched and was reared by the parents, and the remaining three eggs were placed under a British Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*), two of them being hatched successfully.

One clutch was eventually discovered on Gough Island on 30th September, 1956, by Mr. J. J. Van de Merwe, a member of the Gough Island Scientific Survey who had remained on the Island to man the meteorological station set up there. That clutch contained two eggs, which fact supported deductions made from previous field observations on newly-hatched broods, that in the wild the normal clutch size of this species is two. The larger and variable clutch size of the Madingley pair may have been associated with a higher plane of feeding.

The eggs resemble those of the British Moorhen but are rather larger and less strikingly marked. They are a very pale buff colour with a faint purplish ground. There are small purplish spots and blotches, and some rather larger rich brown spots and blotches, mostly concentrated round the wider end of the egg.

The incubation period was 21 days, and each of the last three clutches (the birds went on to lay a total of twenty-three eggs altogether, of which the last eleven did not hatch) was laid a day or two before the previous one was due to hatch.

The plumage of the newly-hatched chick was as follows : Head black down, silky. Bill crimson at base, blue-grey towards the tip, with a white spot on top of upper mandible. A few long, silver silky hairs as a fringe below the bill on the upper throat (rather like the similar orange fringe on a young coot). Body down all black. Wings fringed with down but upper surfaces bare, showing deep pink skin. Legs and feet all black.

The down of the chick was replaced in the juvenile by brown feathers over the whole body except for two dirty-cream bars in the

tail. The legs and feet became green and the bill green with a whitish tip.

There is now a marked contrast in the degree of tameness between the juvenile reared by its parents and those reared by wild British Moorhens. This timidity on the part of the " wild " juveniles and the nature of their habitat has made it difficult to observe them regularly.

* * *

# A VISIT TO SOUTHERN SPAIN

By J. J. YEALLAND (London, England)

" A good sherris-sack hath a two-fold operation in it," said Falstaff in the course of his laudatory speech on this wine and his warning of the deleterious effects, particularly upon young gentlemen, of " thin potations ".

He was, of course, referring to the wine of Xeres, or Jerezdela Frontera, as this ancient Spanish town is now known. But in addition to being the home of the world's choicest sherries, Jerez happens to be one of the best centres from which, particularly if he has the assistance of kind friends, the ornithologist may see the fascinating variety of birds of southern Spain. The mountains to the northward, and the famous Marismas on either side of the lower Guadalquivir River, are within reasonably easy reach of Jerez, while the town itself possesses a zoological garden of considerable interest wherein a number of the native birds may be seen.

In May, 1957, I paid a visit to Jerez at the kind invitation of Don Alberto Duran and Mr. Hugh Ungricht, who created the zoo and are honorary directors of it. May is a good time of year to visit this area, for the weather is then not too hot as it is later, and the abundant wild flowers are in bloom, while in the squares and the bodega gardens, the jacaranda trees, magnolias, hibiscus, and many other plants are in full blossom. The bougainvillea is flowering too, though of course, the actual flower is insignificant, and in some of the streets there are avenues of orange trees with, at that time of year, some ripe oranges on them.

I went by air to Madrid, and had time for a short visit to the small zoo there, which is situated in a beautiful park. Here I was interested to see the Iberian race of the Eagle-Owl (*Bubo bubo hispanus*). Swifts were common about the city as they were in many other parts, and in the park there were also Goldfinches, House Martins, Swallows, and House Sparrows. I looked out for the Spanish Sparrow in country districts, but did not see it, and was told that it is now rare.

The ten-hour train journey from Madrid to Jerez was enjoyable, the more mountainous parts presenting some fine scenery. In the mountains I saw two Azure-winged Magpies ; here and there along the line Bee-eaters flew off from the telegraph wires. One or two Hoopoes, a Roller, some Black-eared Wheatears, and Goldfinches were also seen. At one place, close by the track, there were several Black-winged Stilts in a shallow pool, and Turtle Doves were quite common.

A feature of the Jerez zoological garden is the small flock of White Storks that are quite tame and walk about the place. Various ducks from the Marismas, including Marbled Teal ; the grey form of Tawny Owl, a Black Stork, Golden Eagles, a Booted Eagle, Griffon, and Egyptian Vultures, Purple Herons, Great Bustards, two Little Terns, and a Black-winged Stilt were native birds that I especially remember. There were, of course, many other birds, including Ostriches that nest each year, but have not so far reared young.

There were more tame White Storks in the garden of the Sandeman bodega, and a pair had a nest with young in it on the top of a chimney. There were more nests about the town on church towers.

Dn. Duran took me to see a large breeding colony of Cattle Egrets at a place some miles away. There were hundreds of pairs, some with eggs and others busily engaged in nest-building. With them were some Little Egrets, Night Herons, and White Storks, and as we approached the trees many of the nearer birds rose and circled round. It was a remarkable spectacle and one that only a colour film complete with sound track could adequately describe.

In the bushes close by a Nightingale sang, and a little way off was a Crested Lark. An Eagle and a Harrier were seen some distance off, the latter flying low over a field of canary seed.

Another day we went to an area near Santa Maria where Chameleons and Praying Mantids are to be found : we did not find any then, but later two large Common Chameleons were collected for me to bring back. Apart from the ubiquitous Goldfinch, we did not see any birds, but we did collect three Ant-lions—rather foolishly really, for I had to take them about with me and feed them on ants. They did well, each in a small tin, but it was slightly difficult to search for ants in hotel gardens without being seen and regarded with some curiosity and suspicion. Even in their small tins of sand the Ant-lions made their characteristic pits into which ants and other very small creatures fall. At the slightest movement in the sand at the sides, the Ant-lion concealed at the bottom, flicks grains of sand which help to precipitate the victim to the bottom, where it is seized by a large pair of jaws and drawn beneath. This sand-flicking reaction enables one to see whether the Ant-lion is at home, for a gentle touch on the side of the pit with a pine needle will evoke the response.

One afternoon I went to the ancient town of Arcos, some 30 km. from Jerez, which is situated on a hill with a precipice of some 300 feet on one side. The oldest part of the town with its white buildings and narrow cobbled streets is well known to artists, but it was to see the Griffon Vultures return to roost on ledges in the cliff face that I had come. In front of the square, which is inlaid with dark and light-coloured pebbles in characteristic Spanish style, is a balcony which juts out over the precipice. Soaring before and above the balcony were many Lesser Kestrels—some forty of them—and there were nests of these birds on the cliff face. One passed close by, leisurely eating a grasshopper held in its foot. Nearby was a pair of the Spotless Starling that, I think, had a nest in a crevice. This is *Sturnus unicolor*, and I saw one or two more of them at other places. After a time four of the Vultures came circling out of the sky to settle for the night. Only those who have seen a vulture soaring and gliding can appreciate the real beauty of these fine (and very useful) birds. Sometimes, I was told, twelve or more Griffon Vultures come here to roost, but if they find food late in the day in the surrounding hills, they may remain for the night somewhere close by.

I paid a visit of a day or two to Ronda, in the mountains between Seville and Malaga, and the main purpose of this visit was to investigate the following story in James Reynolds' *Fabulous Spain*.

"The café habitues were, I noticed, looking eagerly toward the bridge. How well I knew why. The usual entertainment put on, gratis, by the starlings was about ready to begin. I had sat spellbound by this show before, and fully expected to again. No one knows for a fact in what era it all started. Around five o'clock every afternoon, except in rain or gales of wind, not too rare at this altitude, hundreds of starlings appear from nests down among the rocks to dart through paper or cardboard hoops made by small boys or 'boys' of all ages. The hoops are about ten inches in diameter, scarcely more than the breadth of a starling's outspread wings. These hoops are skimmed into the air above the bridge (the birds scorn to perform except at the Puente Nuevo entrance to the bridge). At dragon-fly speed, twittering in hysterical excitement, a starling darts through the hoops. A bird almost never misses the hole; sometimes two or three birds may try for the same hoop, to fight it out in mid-air. Many a paper hoop falls to earth torn to pieces. I skimmed some hoops offered to me by a little boy whose eyes were popping with the exertion of trying to be in three or four places at once. Action in the air is too swift to tell how many bull's eyes I scored by proxy. The starlings keep up this performance at high speed for perhaps half an hour, then, as suddenly as the flock arrived, they were off again to rest and preen their feathers on the roof tops. There will be no repeat performance until next day at the same hour. I expect there is a sort of gymnasts'

guild to which the starlings belong, forbidding them to perform more than once a day.

"The whole affair is taken very seriously, and the boys and men argue over the weight of heavy paper or cardboard for skimming as intently as crack tennis players discussing the weight of a racquet."

In the afternoon of my arrival I went to the bridge, but could see no evidence of these strange happenings—in fact, the only birds there at that time were Swifts, and a few dark-coloured Rock Pigeons. I questioned two boys as best I could, and believe they understood, but they seemed to know nothing of "the usual entertainment", and I could see no sign of paper hoops anywhere about. A man at the hotel had a very vague idea that Starlings performed at the bridge, and it may be that they do so at some other time of the year, though Reynolds speaks of them coming from their nests.

What is so strange is that Starlings should find any pleasure in flying through paper hoops—there seems no inducement for them to do it, and in fact one would expect them to be frightened of the hoops. The Puente Neuvo, of great architectural beauty and, I believe, great age, spans a gorge that must be 200 feet deep. Below the bridge the Swifts can be seen wheeling about.

I went again during the evening to the bridge, but there was still no sign of Starlings. I was, however, rewarded, for flying over the bridge among the Swifts were three or four Alpine Swifts, birds very much larger and paler than the common Swift, and, of course, having the underparts whitish with a dark band separating the white of the throat from that of the belly. It was thrilling to see this handsome bird, and I was reminded of the story told again by Dr. Lack in his book, *Swifts in a Tower*.

Lord Rothschild was sitting with Dr. Hartert on a hotel terrace at St. Moritz, when he exclaimed, "Ach, there's Melba!" The fashionable crowd turned, hoping to see Dame Nellie. "Are you sure?" asked Hartert. "Yes," replied Rothschild, "I recognized her by her white belly." The Alpine Swift is, of course, *Apus melba*.

I saw two Choughs flying along the precipice at the end of the hotel garden and an Egyptian Vulture soaring high over the valley. There were one or two Chaffinches, a Blackcap, and one or two of the Spotless Starlings about the garden.

From Ronda I went on to Malaga, the train passing through some magnificent mountain scenery. The only bird of interest seen here was a Rock Sparrow in a small aviary in the pretty public gardens where a few Turtle Doves and a Red-legged Partridge also lived. I noticed in various places that a few Goldfinches were kept in very small cages hanging on the walls of houses. A stranger pet was the Red-legged Partridge of which I saw several, all in extremely small cages, but looking in good health.

I went on to Algeciras, but saw no birds of interest on the way. The journey from Algeciras back to Jerez was, however, delightful, the motor coach passing through some lovely scenery. Along the road I noticed some Corn Buntings, a few Stonechats, a Great Grey Shrike, two Woodchat-Shrikes, and three Pied Wheatears, as well as a large number of the White Storks in one place. There were many cork trees growing here, and, of course, in other places, the trees not apparently suffering from having the cork bark stripped from the trunks. This is regenerated in the course of time. It is a pity that this fine tree is not more widely grown here ; it is, of course, rather like the evergreen oak, and there are some in southern England that are evidently unaffected by the coldest winters.

The next day I went to the Marismas, a vast flat area of marsh and sand dunes. In the forested parts Mediterranean pines are mostly grown, but there are cork trees, too. I stayed for two days at a comfortable and well-furnished shooting lodge through the kindness of the Marquis Santurce. To reach this place, called the Palacio las Nuevas, it was necessary to go by motor-boat from Bonanza at the mouth of the Guadalquivir for about a hour's journey (with a favourable tide) to a point called Brenes where the caretaker of the Palacio was waiting with a horse for me, the rest of the journey taking about another hour. How this house and that of the caretaker, together with stables, could ever have been built in this remote spot, I cannot imagine, for all the materials must have been transported across the three or four miles of mud-flats, presumably by pack horse or horse-drawn sleigh, from the river bank where I landed.

On the way we passed close by several nests of Black-winged Stilts which were common. Avocets were there in small numbers, and a few Redshanks, Kentish Plovers, Little Egrets, and Common Herons. Up to forty Spoonbills were seen and Pratincoles were very common, while in the distance, like a pink haze, was a great flock of Flamingos which must have numbered quite a thousand. They were not nesting and were moving about the marsh, generally in the area between the house and the river.

There were several nests of Swallows on the rafters of the stable and, on this area of higher, and consequently dry, land were some Blue-headed Wagtails and some Pipits that must, I think, have been Tawny Pipits whose nests were built under canopies of dried blanket-weed that had, when the water level was higher, become entangled in the branches of a species of succulent plant.

There were a few Egyptian Vultures about ; the skeletons of cattle here and there in the marsh were picked very clean. An occasional Black Kite, a few Little, Black, and Sandwich Terns were also to be seen.

The next morning the caretaker came with the horses and, pointing

to the westward horizon, said, " Coto." This was the only word that we mutually understood, and from it I gathered that he wanted to take me to the Coto Doñana, the area of the Marismas where some excellent films of birds have been taken during the past three years. Knowing that there were several ornithologists filming in that area at the time, I was not very keen to go for fear of disturbing them and the birds they were filming. In so vast an area, the chance of this was not perhaps very great, and in any case it would have been impossible to explain this to him. The ride took a good four hours ; it was interesting to see how the vegetation varied with the type of soil and the degree of moisture in it. At length we reached what he wanted to show me, and I was relieved to find no sign of hides or angry ornithologists. At this place, which I took to be the edge of the Coto Doñana, several cork trees grew amid a yellow-flowered cistus, a tall kind of erica and various other plants, including brambles.

In the cork trees were nests of Cattle Egrets, White Storks, and a few Little Egrets and Night Herons—the mixture as before, but with the difference that in holes in the trees and in, so to speak, the basements of the Storks' nests, there were Jackdaws breeding. A few Bee-eaters, Magpies, and a Blackcap were also here, and in the distance several deer watched us. Rabbits and some lizards were about this dry, sandy place, and I was interested to see several of the wild gladiolus in bloom amongst the bracken. These were dainty cerise flowers, and only a small fraction of the size of the monstrous blooms we are accustomed to see. On the way back I saw what must have been three or four Sandgrouse which rose some distance in front of the horses. Some ducks, probably Mallard, rose a long way off, but I was disappointed in what I had most wanted to find—the White-headed Duck, the only European representative of the Erismaturinæ. There had been a drought earlier in that region, and the White-headed Ducks had evidently moved away. I did not see any place in that particular fraction of the Marismas suitable for this duck, which is of skulking habit and lives on waters where there are reeds and other vegetation. Here the rushes and most of the other presumably palatable plants are grazed short by the cattle and horses.

On the way back we called at a primitive house built of thatch and having a bare earth floor, but even so it was kept very clean, and we were made welcome with a cup of coffee. Here, as at the Palacio, some Grey Lag type of domestic geese were kept, presumably as decoys for the wild Grey Lags that come for the winter. Late the next afternoon we set out for the river bank where the motor-boat was waiting. There was a moderate breeze blowing against the down-stream tide, making the water quite rough ; also making the rather decayed motor-boat appear less inviting than on the tranquil waters of two days before. Sure enough it was not long before the engine

coughed and stopped in the best traveller's tale tradition, but the strong tide carried us on towards our destination, and it was not long before the blocked petrol pipe was cleared.

On my last day at Jerez, Dn. Duran took me to the mountains to the north-eastward. Here were many fine trees such as Spanish oak, among which we saw Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, Jays, Long-tailed Tits, and other birds. I had expected to hear Golden Orioles, but did not happen to do so, but there were snatches of song from Nightingales. On the road three or four Egyptian Vultures rose from the carcase of a freshly killed pig. An eagle that might have been Bonelli's, we thought, was flying along some great crags.

No new birds were seen on the train journey back to Madrid, and very early the next morning I arrived back at London Airport with my much-travelled Ant-lions, two Chameleons, and two Scorpions that we had collected in the mountains—souvenirs of a most interesting and enjoyable holiday.

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## BENGALESE FINCH × SILVERBILL HYBRIDS

By Erica Eisner (Oxford, England)

In a previous paper (Eisner, 1957) I gave reasons for believing the Bengalese Finch to be a domesticated form of the Sharptailed Finch, *Lonchura striata*, and said that I considered it most unlikely that the Bengalese had a hybrid origin. The hybrid which has been most often suggested in this context is one of the Sharptail and the Silverbill, *Lonchura malabarica*, but this seems especially unlikely because hybrids between the Bengalese and the Silverbill are reported to be sterile.

During the spring of 1957, by the kindness of Dr. Holger Poulsen and Dr. Desmond Morris, some Bengalese × Silverbill hybrids which had been bred in the Copenhagen Zoo were made available to me. These birds were two broods of a male brown and white Bengalese with a female African Silverbill, and all six turned out to be males. These hybrid males were put into outside aviaries together with female Bengalese Finches. During the course of the season twelve clutches were laid and properly incubated. Of the sixty-three eggs in these clutches not a single one hatched. Thus, this confirms Steinbacher and Wolters' (1956) report that such hybrids are sterile. I therefore believe that the evidence against a Sharptail × Silverbill hybrid origin of the Bengalese is now so strong that this theory must finally be abandoned.

It is interesting to observe how the characteristics of the two parent species are assorted in the hybrid. In both appearance and behaviour these six male hybrids are very uniform. I shall not discuss their song because I believe this is largely learnt. In colour they resemble

Sharptailed Finches or self-coloured Bengalese : the head, back, and tail are of the same dark brown, and the belly is oatmeal-coloured. In detail, the flank feathers bear the same type of marking—squamations—as those of the Sharptail. However, the shading of the neck and breast is quite different and considerably resembles that of the Silverbill, except that there is a small, dark patch immediately below the base of the beak. While in the Sharptail there is an abrupt transition from the dark breast to the pale belly, in the hybrids there is a gradual shading from the dark feathers of the head and throat into the light belly feathers. The under tail-coverts of the hybrids are also pale coloured ; in the Sharptail they are dark brown. The rump feathers of the hybrids are light coloured with darker markings, like those of the Sharptail except that those nearest the base of the tail are very heavily marked with black : this probably is an inheritance from the African Silverbill whose upper tail-coverts are black. The tail is long and pointed like that of the Bengalese and Sharptail. As one might expect on genetical grounds, the hybrids have none of the white feathers of the Bengalese. The upper mandible is nearly black and the lower dark grey, again like the Sharptail—the Silverbill has a pale silver-grey beak. The hybrids' feet and legs are brownish like those of the Sharptail ; the Silverbill has pinkish feet. In build the hybrids are intermediate between their parents : much heavier built than the Silverbill, they are somewhat less sturdy than the Bengalese.

In behaviour also they differ clearly from the Bengalese in ways characteristic of the Silverbill. There is a photograph of Bengalese courtship in my previous paper (Eisner, 1957) which may be used for reference. A singing hybrid keeps its tail in line with the body, and does not fan it ; the Bengalese raises and fans its tail. While the Bengalese sings with large movements of the beak, the hybrids keep their beaks almost shut, enabling them to hold a straw in their beaks while they sing and especially during courtship ; the Bengalese never carries a straw while singing but the Silverbill often does. In courtship the Bengalese pivots a great deal from side to side, but does not move up and down much ; the hybrids pivot little but bounce a lot up and down. All these differences in behaviour from the Bengalese represent behaviour patterns of the Silverbill. In one obvious character, though, the hybrids resemble the Bengalese and not the Silverbill : when they sing their belly feathers are raised and fluffed out, while the singing Silverbill keeps his belly feathers sleek.

The point of interest which emerges from these descriptions is that though on the whole the appearance and behaviour of the hybrids must be described as intermediate between those of the parent species, when small components, such as for example the position of the tail during courtship, are considered the hybrids are not intermediate,

but resemble either one or other of the parents. This suggests that such small components act as genetic units and show dominance and recessiveness in the usual way, in some instances the character of the one parent being dominant, in others of the second. Such a suggestion can only be confirmed by study of many different hybrids of related species, and it is therefore well worth recording any available facts about such birds. Also, although there is a list available of hybrids which have been bred in captivity (Hopkinson, 1938–39) there is very little published information, apart from that contained in Steinbacher and Wolters' books, on whether such hybrids are fertile or not ; this is a point of very considerable scientific interest regardless of any special controversies such as that on the ancestry of the Bengalese.

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# THE BREEDING OF DINEMELLI'S WEAVER

By ROLAND W. HAWKINS (Pittsburgh, Pa., U.S.A.)

The first pair of *Dinemellia dinemelli* was introduced into Pittsburgh's Conservatory-Aviary on 15th August, 1954. The birds were purchased from Louis Ruhe, Incorporated, of New York. Since their introduction they have been the most energetic and industrious birds of our entire collection.

Early in January, 1955, they began carrying nesting materials to various sites in the aviary. This behaviour caused me to make regular observations of the birds' activities. Countless hours were spent observing them carrying twigs, small branches, and plant fibres to various sites in the room. For months they carried sticks although at no time did the semblance of a nest take shape. When the Weavers would *en masse* a few bits of material the Scarlet Ibis or the Javan Hill Myna would take apparent delight in scattering whatever accumulation they had made. This activity continued for the remainder of the year, yet at no time did the Weavers show any signs of frustration or indication of abandoning their determined efforts.

During this period they were extremely cordial to each other and chattered away incessantly. As it was impossible to separate the male

from the female on sight, I will presume it was the male who demonstrated the courtship displays. The male would bow low over his perch, flutter his outstretched wings while greeting the female with an ardent chatter. The female would return his greetings with a weaker fluttering of wings. This mild courtship display was effected whenever the male rejoined the female even after the briefest of separations. At every meeting both birds exchanged noisy greetings. On rare occasions the male was observed carrying food to the female. This general pattern continued with regularity until April, 1956, at which time the Weavers moved into the next room to escape the depredations of the Scarlet Ibis and Javan Hill Mynas. The doors separating the rooms are fitted so that they do not completely close. This small opening permits the smaller species free access to either room while the larger birds are confined to a single room.

The new room apparently inspired the Weavers to continue their nest building with still greater vigour, for within a week they were busy carrying sticks to new locations. In their new territory they found that the curtain vine (*Cissus sicyoides*) from tropical America proved an ideal plant for providing them with excellent nesting sites. The vine grows profusely all over the room and in its many entanglements the Weavers revelled. Within a month three bulky nests built side by side were completed under the conservatory roof on the north side of the room. The nests were all supported by the curtain vine, against the glass of the conservatory. The entrance holes to the three nests were all made at the bottom with a slight tunnel projection. Several times the Blue-cheeked Barbets (*Cyanops asiatica*) entered the nests, at which time the Weavers would go in after them and quickly drive them out. After one of these infrequent skirmishes with the Barbets I observed the Weavers return to inspect their nests. I then discovered the birds had several tunnel openings to each nest. A later examination verified this observation. Each nest was found to have three separate interior chambers all with their own entrances.

With their nests completed in mid-May the Weavers' activities settled down to periodic trips in and out of the nests. At this time I felt certain that it would be only a short time before the female would be laying. By the end of June with the birds' activities showing no new developments, I was beginning to assume that both Weavers were males. This line of thought was further substantiated when no acts of mating were observed other than the mild courtship displays. By December the birds were not showing any interest in the nests, a condition that remained until the middle of February, 1957.

Nesting activity started in earnest the first week of March, 1957, with the Weavers building several new nests around the room. The new nests were not as large structurally as the three nests completed the previous year. In April they showed interest in the old nests and

DINEMELLI'S WEAVER.
Large Bulky Nests made of Sticks.

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DINEMELLI'S WEAVER.
Begging Food from Adult, September 7, 1957.

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Dinemelli's Weaver.
Two weeks out of Nest.

Copyright] [R. W. Hawkins

Dinemelli's Weaver.
Independent, One Month out of Nest.

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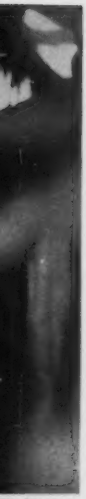

*W. Hawkins*

were seen carrying sticks to effect repairs. Through April, May, and June both birds were observed frequently visiting the old nests. By this time my observations were only casual as I now firmly believed both birds to be males.

On 15th August, 1957, while feeding mealworms, I was surprised to see the Weavers display a belligerent attitude towards the other birds in their eagerness to get the worms. Normally they shared the worms with the other birds without fuss, content to receive an equal share. Watching them closely I was soon rewarded, for both Weavers were carrying the worms to the centre nest. After watching them make several trips to the nest I felt certain in assuming they had young.

Through the next two weeks the Weavers would not tolerate other birds in the vicinity of the nest. Regardless of size they were all quickly driven away from the nesting area.

On 29th August one young Weaver made its first appearance in the room. The fledgling was discovered on the ground unable to fly. I felt reasonably certain, from the example they had set in protecting their nest, that the adults would give it ample protection. Much to my surprise they showed complete indifference to the presence of other birds near the baby. The parents proved good providers, however, and the young bird never wanted for food. Besides mealworms the adults fed the fledgling a variety of fruits along with some of our insectivorous mixture. Both parents took turns in the feeding chore. After stuffing the young bird the adults left, to busy themselves with their own activities. When the baby cried for food they would feed it again. The feeding periods averaged approximately one and a half hours from the time the young Weaver left the nest. On the fourth morning the White-crested Jay-Thrushes discovered the baby and immediately set out to destroy it. Fortunately I was present and able to intervene before serious damage was inflicted. This incident, although observed by the adults, failed to incite them, behaviour difficult to understand considering the strong defence previously shown at the nest.

Witnessing this cool indifference shown by the parents I removed the young bird to the kitchen. Within a week the young Weaver had gained sufficient strength to sustain its powers of flight. On its return to the room the adults, although recognizing their offspring, displayed no excitement. They fed it, however, and in a few days the young bird was following them everywhere. By 15th September the young Weaver was feeding without assistance from the parents.

It is now January, 1958, and once again the adult birds are showing an interest in the old nests. It will be interesting on their next nesting to see if they raise more than one baby and whether the same nesting chamber will be used.

# OBITUARY

## SYDNEY PORTER (1900—1958)

With the passing away of Sydney Porter on 9th January, 1958, one of the best known and most popular British bird enthusiasts has been lost to aviculture. He joined the Society in 1920 at the age of twenty and had since been one of its most active members. He was extremely skilful at keeping rare and difficult birds of which he continually maintained a fine collection in his aviaries at Derby. At the same time he had an excellent general knowledge of ornithology, as well as a gift for observation and for writing. His numerous articles have been a great asset to the AVICULTURAL MAGAZINE throughout the years, whether he related his avicultural experiences or gave a vivid account of his numerous trips all over the world. He had travelled widely. Plagued by asthma, he avoided the hard northern winters as often as he could. He visited East and South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, South-Eastern Asia, and California. He went twice to the last country, in 1948 and 1952, and made many close friends among the local bird men. We had hoped he would soon come again, but his health had been getting worse during the last two years. The writer, along with Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Kinsey and Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Sheffler, from California, paid him a few days' visit at Derby in September, 1956, and we found him far from well; but he still had many rare birds. He became more and more of an invalid in the following months and finally died at the early age of 58.

Sydney Porter was kind and unselfish, giving to his friends many rare birds brought over from his expeditions abroad, or reared in his aviaries. For instance, he sent to Clères in 1934 a trio of New Zealand Shovellers, a species which had never been imported before, nor has come again since; young were reared in 1935, the following year. This is but one example of his friendly generosity.

There are now very few left of the aviculturists who made bird keeping reach such a high level between the two world wars. The disappearance of Sydney Porter creates a great void, and his numerous friends will mourn him, but keep his memory vivid in their hearts.

J. DELACOUR.

* * *

Sydney Porter

*To face p.* 56

# SUCCESSFUL BREEDING OF AFRICAN GREY PARROTS IN DENMARK

By WALTHER LANGBERG (Copenhagen, Denmark)

When starting in the bird fancy about thirty years ago, Budgerigars were my first birds. Later on I turned over to foreign finches, starting with the more common African species and adding the rarer Australian at a later date. After some time I also took up lovebirds, and as my first parrakeets got Bourke's and Red-rumped, with which I was quite successful. My interest in parrot-like birds grew, and later I obtained several other species of parrakeets. About nine years ago I decided to try my hand with the large talking parrots, mainly the African Grey.

The first Grey Parrot I got was not a success in any way. The bird was very shy and a bad screamer. I hoped it would become more tame as time went on, but suddenly the bird died from food poisoning.

My next Grey was a wonderful bird. The bird dealer, from whom I bought the bird, had obtained it when quite young. The bird had spent a couple of years in his shop and was very tame and a good talker. I suppose it was about three years old when I got it. It soon became a highly esteemed member of the family, and gave us much pleasure. Countless times I came running, when I believed that my wife was calling for me, but it was the bird—we called it "Jaco"—which imitated my wife's voice perfectly. We presumed that the bird was a hen, and I started to try to get a cock. As I had expected, this was by no means an easy job. The choice was not great, but every Grey Parrot, on which I could lay my hands, and which could be presumed to be a cock, was tried. Usually the birds would not agree. In order to accustom the birds to each other I had a large cage made, divided by a removable wire slide. I put "Jaco" in one compartment and the latest arrival in the other, and when the birds apparently were accustomed to each other withdrew the slide. Usually the result was not encouraging; the birds fought or one chased the other.

Someone advised me to try with wild Grey Parrots, real screamers, as there was no use in trying with tame birds. I should certainly not recommend this method to any persons with weak nerves, as in my experience, Grey Parrots caught as adult never become tame. They do not lose their fear of people, but start screaming as soon as one comes near their cage. This is rather terrible, the voice being something between that of a pig and a cow, and continuing until one leaves.

Young Greys have a grey iris, the adult bird's iris being whitish-yellow. It is my experience that if a Grey with a whitish-yellow iris is

shy and starts screaming as soon as approached it will be next to impossible to get such a bird tame. A young bird with a grey iris will, however, in the course of time become tame and stop crying, provided it is correctly treated.

After all these unsuccessful attempts, from which I, however, fortunately learned something, I was one day able to make a choice from a large consignment of Grey Parrots.

My choice was a big, dark grey bird, with strong beak and rather big feet, as I had a theory that a cock should look like this. (The late Duke of Bedford, in the first edition of *Parrots and Parrot-like Birds*, also supports the theory that males are bigger than females.) For some reason females are imported much more frequently than males. As to colour, this may not be considered a guide in sexing, as the distribution of the species is wide, and birds from different parts of the territory vary considerably both in size and colour. One sub-species, the Timneh Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus timneh*) from French Guiana, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, is somewhat smaller, darker in colour, and has a brownish-red tail. This bird is rarely imported, I have only seen one at a dealer's here.

The new, presumed cock, was put in an ordinary parrot cage, 18 inches by 18 inches and 32 inches high. (This size is in common use in Denmark for larger parrots, but is too small for permanent use.) The new bird was a little shy, screamed sometimes, but as its iris was still a bit greyish, I thought it was a young bird and would become tamer as time went on. This actually happened, but it never became as confiding as "Jaco". We called the new bird "Coco", and this it learned to say, but its vocabulary has never been as large as that of "Jaco".

"Jaco" was put in a cage, similar to that of "Coco", and all the winter the birds stood side by side. Early in the spring, 1954, I tried putting the birds together in a large cage, and was very pleased to find the birds agreed. I made a nest-box for them which was hung on the outside of the cage, but they seemed to take no interest in it. Unfortunately all my outside aviaries were in use, so the Grey Parrots had to spend all the summer in the cage.

One of the presumed cocks—rejected by "Jaco", was given a mate. When putting the two birds together, they agreed very well immediately, and I now believed that I had two true pairs.

In the spring, 1955, I put all four parrots in an outside aviary with an adjoining shelter. The flight was approximately 7 feet long, $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide, and 7 feet high, the shelter $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet by $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet and 7 feet high. The floor of the flight and shelter was of creosoted wood, raised about one foot from the ground. The entrance from flight to shelter was almost the whole width of the aviary, and about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet high.

The four birds agreed tolerably, but kept in couples. As time went

on it was obvious that " Coco " and " Jaco " did not like company, the others seemed to dominate them too much, so I took them out and put them back in the large cage inside. They were busy in the nest-box but nothing else happened.

In the course of the summer, the two birds in the aviary made several attempts to mate, but nothing more happened, and in the autumn they were taken inside and placed in a cage similar to the other one, with a nesting-box.

At the end of the winter it seemed that " Coco " and " Jaco " took more interest in each other, and " Jaco " was fed by " Coco " every day. They also had mating dances with hanging wings, and tried to mate. I therefore decided to put this pair in the outside aviary as soon as the weather permitted. In the shelter I put two nest-boxes, 12 inches by 12 inches by 20 inches high, hung on the wall just under the ceiling, and on the floor I placed a small barrel without a lid. In the outside flight also, a box of approximately the same size as the others, but somewhat deeper, was hung. On the bottom of the boxes and the barrel I put some shavings and a clod of peat moss, in order to give the birds something to gnaw to pieces.

About the 1st May, 1956, " Coco " and " Jaco " were put in the flight. They felt at home very quickly, knowing the place from the previous year, and began to mate. At the beginning of June, " Jaco " took great interest in the box, hung on the back wall of the shelter, had a lot to do in it, and on Saturday, 16th June, she spent all day inside it. On Sunday morning, when feeding the birds, I saw that " Jaco " was outside the box. I took the opportunity of looking in the box and saw the first egg of the Grey Parrot. My supposition was correct, " Jaco " was certainly a hen. She went back into the box and sat on the egg, which probably had been laid on the 16th. I inspected the box every day, on the 19th there were two eggs, on the 25th three, and on the 27th four eggs ; as far as I could judge there were intervals of three days between the eggs. " Jaco " sat very tightly, and I was, of course, very anxious to know whether the eggs were fertile, although I did not really expect this, as the matings did not seem to be quite successful.

On 14th July I examined the eggs, and they were all clear. Now I was doubtful again ; maybe both were hens.

In the course of a few days the birds again started mating, but again in the same scamped way as before. They ran up and down the branches with hanging wings, and were obviously very excited. The mating then took place, sideways, and it seemed to me that it was not a true mating, only an attempt.

On 4th August, " Jaco " was again inside the box and had laid an egg. This time also four eggs were laid, at intervals of three days. She sat from the first egg, and on 21st August I tested the eggs ;

I hardly believed my eyes, they were all fertile. It seemed to me, however, that the airsacs in all the eggs were rather large, and I was afraid that the embryos were drying up. " Jaco," however, sat very tightly, and obviously did not mind that I looked in the box now and then.

Up to this time the food had consisted of spray millet, canary, hemp, and sunflower (white and two kinds of striped) ; also sprouted canary, hemp, oats, sunflower, and maize. Of soft food they had white bread soaked in milk, with some vitamins and glucose added.

I thought that something extra was needed for feeding the young, and as fresh, half-ripe maize-spikes, which make a natural food for parrots, were obtainable at this time, I added these to their menu. I also added monkey nuts, which are highly relished by the Grey Parrots. They hardly touched any green food, but took apple, though without great enthusiasm. The maize-spikes, however, seemed to be the right rearing food, and more than 200 were taken before the season ended. When night-frost comes, the maize-spikes are no longer obtainable, but my wife had, at the end of the season, bought a large supply and placed them in plastic bags in a refrigerator. In this way we had this excellent food for a quite long time.

A catastrophe nearly occurred, just at the time the young should hatch. The birds had gnawed the box so much, mainly on the lid, that a large piece of it fell down, fortunately not into the box, but on the floor of the shelter.

On Sunday, 2nd September, I examined the eggs and saw that the airsacs in all the eggs were filled out, and to my amazement I saw small marks in the shell of one of the eggs, showing that a young one had picked the shell and was about to come out.

On 8th September, when " Jaco " was outside the box, I had a look in the nest and saw two, apparently well-fed, young ones and a third coming out of the egg. On 11th September, I again looked in the box and saw that the fourth young one was trying to come out from the shell. As the young one apparently had difficulty in getting clear of the shell I put in my hand to help it, but " Jaco " blew out her feathers and tried to bite, so I had to take a spoon to take out the half-hatched young one. It seemed rather weak, so I tried to help it by carefully breaking away most of the shell. I put the young one back with the spoon and hoped it would be saved, but when inspecting the nest in the afternoon, I found it was dead, apparently bitten to death. Probably I had not put the young one sufficiently deeply under the hen, and she had obviously mistaken it for some other animal.

The newly-hatched young were flesh-coloured, with light beaks and claws, covered with light down, looking like oversized young lovebirds. The incubation takes approximately 30 days.

As long as the youngsters were small, the hen only left the box very

occasionally, and was fed by the cock, who went down to her in the nest.

About 18th September the beaks of the young started to turn black. The hen now left the box more often and took food herself, whereas the cock went down into the box to feed the young. He also became more aggressive towards me when I inspected the nest. When the young were about one month old they started to grow grey down, and the hen left the nest for longer periods than before.

About 6th October I noticed that the smallest of the young did not develop like the others, and obviously did not get sufficient food. On 8th October it lay in a corner of the nest-box and looked very sick, the skin being quite flabby, there seemed to be no doubt that the bird was underfed. I therefore decided to take it into the house and try to feed it artificially. The young bird was placed in a nest-box on a layer of peat moss and sawdust with a 50 watt Ellstein infra-red lamp to keep it warm The bird was fed with a gruel consisting of white bread soaked in milk (milk sop) mixed with glucose and a preparation, very rich in proteins, called "Recoven", various vitamin preparations were also added. Later on mashed grapes, bananas, and other soft fruits were added. The food was given lukewarm by a syringe. It worked surprisingly well, and the young bird very soon recovered and felt comfortable. As it grew older we had to feed it more often, up to ten times a day. It was a hard job for my wife, who had taken over the care of this bird, but it had to be done. The bird, of course, became very tame and affectionate, and loved to be handled.

At the time when the weak youngster was taken away, both the others had started to grow feathers, and even the red tail-feathers could be distinguished. The weaker youngster took considerably longer to get the red tail-feathers, but later on they developed very rapidly.

15th October was a black day. When my wife went to look at the Grey Parrots in the aviary, one of the young lay dead on the floor. The youngsters, at this time about six weeks old, were quite well-developed. I believe that the bird in question had climbed up to the nest hole, lost its balance, and fallen out. The post-mortem examination showed no injuries, so I expect the young bird died of cold, as the day was rather cold. Of course I became worried, and decided to take the family inside; the big cage was erected and the nest-box hung inside. It deprived the old birds of a lot of room, but they settled down nicely in the familiar surroundings, and a little later the young one was fed by them.

There was now only one young one left with the parents, and on 17th November, when it was about 2 months old, I observed it feeding itself on a maize-spike, which the old birds had dropped in the nest-box.

I now regularly put maize-spikes and sprouted sunflower in the box, and these were taken by the young, which, of course, was also fed by the parents.

On 23rd November the youngster climbed up and sat on the edge of the nest-box, and on 25th November it left the box for the first time, climbing around on the cage bars, but returning immediately to the box when we approached, the old birds taking a defensive position with blown-out feathers.

I noticed that the young one was of a lighter colour, had a light tongue, and light nails, whereas the hand-fed young one was a darker colour, with black tongue, and black nails.

After leaving the nest, to which it however returned, as soon as we approached and always at night, it was mainly fed by the cock. It also took food itself, mainly sprouted sunflower, and some small, hard nuts, called Cembra nuts, but was still fed by the cock. As late as 7th January, when the young one was four months old, I saw the cock feeding it.

Of course I shall not part with these two youngsters ; I am interested to learn how old Grey Parrots are when their iris becomes yellow, and possibly also to ascertain at what age they become sexually developed. The hand-fed young one I think is possibly hardly suitable for breeding, being too disposed towards human beings ; still, it will be interesting to get these problems solved.

As to the age of my old Grey Parrots, it is, of course, quite impossible for me to state an exact age, but from the information I have obtained I assume that the cock was 5–6 and the hen 10–11 years old when they first bred.

" Jaco " and " Coco " spent all the winter 1956–57 in the house in the large cage. In the spring their aviary was made ready and the nest-box hung at the same place in the shelter as last time. First, however, the box had to undergo a thorough repair, as all the front was gnawed to pieces. On 7th April both the parent birds were released in the aviary and immediately settled down in the well-known surroundings.

After some time " Coco " started to feed " Jaco ", and we observed occasional matings. At the beginning of June, " Jaco " sometimes went down in the box, but never remained there for long. On 17th June, " Jaco " spent almost all day in the box, and the next day I had a chance to have a look in the box and saw the first egg. When inspecting the box on 20th June, I saw two eggs, and on 26th June, four eggs. On examining the eggs on 6th July I found that at least one egg was fertile.

Contrary to the previous year, this time it was considerably more difficult to inspect the nest, as " Jaco " was very aggressive and did not allow me to look in the box. When she was outside and I

1956 BREEDING OF GREY PARROTS.
Three youngsters in nest-box.

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HAND-FED TAME YOUNG GREY PARROT FED WITH SYRINGE.
(Bred 1956.)

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[Gottlieb

1957 Breeding of Grey Parrots.

Youngsters on perch, hen on left, cock below.

approached the aviary, she immediately returned to the shelter, so that I only occasionally had time to open the door to the shelter before she was inside the nest.

On 22nd July, however, I managed to have a look in the box before she came inside, and saw that a young Grey was hatched. On 25th July I again had a chance to look in the nest, and now saw two living young ones.

Up to now the cock had taken some milk-sop as well as the usual dry and sprouted seed, so I hoped that milk-sop would prove a substitute for the maize-spikes, unobtainable at this time. But as soon as the young ones were hatched he stopped taking milk-sop, and neither of the parents took any sunflower, hemp, or canary seed from the shelf in the shelter. I then tried hanging some seed pots of canary and hemp on the netting in the flight, which arrangement the birds obviously approved, as they immediately started to feed on the seed. During the time of feeding dry sunflower was hardly touched. The birds mainly took dry hemp and canary and sprouted sunflower, hemp, and canary seed, later on also milk-sop again. As far as I can remember, I could not get any maize-spikes until the young were about 3 weeks old.

The youngsters thrived well, and on 29th September one young one sat on the edge of the nest, but not until 13th October did one of the young sit on the perch in the shelter. The feathers, wings, and tail were fully-developed, the bird was a bit slimmer than the parents, and, of course, the iris was dark grey.

The following day both youngsters were outside the nest and sat in the flight in the morning. They were quite alike, but in the course of a few days it appeared that one of them apparently did not feel quite well, and I observed that it was not fed as much as the other one. They also started to feed themselves, but in this respect also one of them seemed more advanced.

On 22nd October the weaker young one sat on the floor of the shelter, apparently feeling cold. As the evening was rather cold, I considered it safer to take the bird inside the house, and placed it in a big nest-box with a 50 watt Ellstein lamp to keep it warm. My wife fed the bird with a syringe and it quickly recovered. When I took the young bird inside, it was wild and shy, and screamed as soon as we approached, but within three to four days it was quite tame, and in the course of a fortnight it started to imitate the human voice. On 14th October I heard it say "Jaco" quite distinctly. The other young bird is still in the aviary with the parents, and is still fed by the cock.

I will try to let the parent birds stay in the aviary all the winter, and shall only take them inside if the weather becomes very cold or if they should appear to be uncomfortable. In the winter, 1956–57,

1957 BREEDING OF GREY PARROTS. [Gottlieb
Youngsters on perch, hen on left, cock below.

Copyright]

I kept two wild-caught Grey Parrots in a similar aviary all the winter, and they apparently felt no discomfort. Of course, that winter was unusually mild for our country.

At the moment I have nine Grey Parrots, and hope in the course of time to breed a second generation. The nine birds consist of the old breeding pair and their four youngsters, a supposedly somewhat younger pair, and a newly imported bird, which I believe to be a cock.

* * *

## PILEATED PARRAKEET × CRIMSON ROSELLA HYBRID

By H. P. Van Heyst (Groenlo, Holland)

My male Pileated Parrakeet mated with my solitary Crimson Rosella female in the spring of 1957. As far as I know this cross has never been recorded before. At the start of the breeding season it was rather difficult, as the hen was a little afraid of the big beak of her partner, who tried to feed her out of his crop. But soon she ceased flying away from her amorous mate, and responded to his advances, and so breeding began.

One day the Crimson female disappeared into a hole in her tree trunk, and remained there till evening, when she came out for a few minutes to drink. During the day she was fed by her faithful husband, who sat in front of the hole in the trunk looking in and whistling to her several times to come for food, when he fed her out of his crop.

During the incubation period the male Pileated was in high spirits and very active ; he made the most curious breakneck leaps during flight or wallowed in the mud on the ground, calling " ririrk " to his mate.

Three weeks later she came out of the nest more frequently, several times during the day, so I concluded there must be young, and I found four beautiful chicks in the nest. Alas ! one night, perhaps a fortnight later, the Crimson hen did not go back to her nest (probably she had been disturbed), and I found the parents had stopped feeding the young.

I took them out of the nest at once, and with the magnificent help of my friend Dr. van Leeuwen, a veterinary surgeon, the experiment of bringing them up artificially by hand was successfully accomplished, and the four young grew up into adults. It is a pity that owing to the carelessness of a member of my staff one of them escaped, but the remaining three are now very fine birds. They become more colourful every day, and enjoy the fresh Dutch air of my country, where they are now acclimatized.

The colour of the young is predominantly green on the back, with red spots on the head and on the rump, with little blue segments on the flight feathers, and with the typical blue spots on the cheeks, which only occur in Crimson Rosellas. The breast is dull violet-grey, with a deep red spot on the abdomen. The beak is a typical Pileated beak, and the whole shape resembles the Pileated more than the Crimson Rosella. It would be interesting to know whether these hybrids, which are already very beautiful, are fertile. I intend to continue breeding them, and I hope to report the results this year.

* * *

## BREEDING RECORDS OF BRITISH BIRDS FOR 1957

By HYLTON BLYTHE, British Bird Breeders' Association (Thorpe Bay, Essex)

During the past season several new species have been recorded as having been successfully bred, and our list is now as follows :—

Blackbird (normal and abnormal)
Blackcap
Bramblefinch
Brown Linnet
Bullfinch
Chaffinch
Crossbill
Goldfinch
Greenfinch (normal and abnormal)
Hawfinch
Hedge Sparrow
House Sparrow
Jay
Jackdaw
Lesser Redpoll
Linnet
Magpie
Mealy Redpoll
Missel Thrush
Reed Bunting
Redstart
Ring Ouzel
Siskin
Song Thrush (normal and abnormal)
Stonechat
Tree Pipit
Tree Sparrow
Twite
Yellow Hammer
Yellow Wagtail
Yellow × Pied Wagtail hybrid

We are aware that many birds in addition to the above have been bred in this country and abroad, but we are only concerned with our own records. Many more species, some quite rare, have nested but failed to rear young. These do not appear as records, but we do try to help breeders to better success each year and we deal with cases individually to provide the best advice available.

One most interesting event has been the breeding of rare-coloured Blackbirds by Mr. S. Evans, of Port Talbot. Another has been the first recorded breeding of Yellow × Pied Wagtail hybrids, by Mr. J. Spinks, of Colchester. Medals for these two outstanding achievements have been awarded.

We have placed our records for the past two years before Dr. T. G. Taylor, for his consideration and information, and he has most

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We have placed our records for the past two years before Dr. T. G. Taylor, for his consideration and information, and he has most

helpfully sent his observations which we print for the guidance of members. Dr. Taylor has given us very great assistance in the past, and last year contributed a very valuable paper to our handbook—"The Importance of Nutrition."

Will breeders of British birds help during the coming year by sending records to us—it is very simple, and it is only by such information that we can continue to be of service. In the meantime, if any reader of this magazine is in need of information or advice on this subject, will they please communicate with the British Bird Breeders' Association, 7 Clieveden Road, Thorpe Bay, Essex. Stamped, addressed envelope appreciated.

B.B.B.A. Breeding Records reviewed by T. G. Taylor, M.A., Ph.D.

To begin with I should like to offer my congratulations to members of the B.B.B.A. on the large number of their breeding successes and on the great variety of species, many of them rare, which they bred in 1957. These notes, however, are concerned only with the feeding systems used in the successful rearing of the common hardbills.

The over-riding impression with which I was left after reading the record sheets was the trouble which breeders had taken to provide their birds with as wide a variety of natural foods as possible. It was obvious that their aim in housing and management as well as in feeding, was to make conditions as much like nature as possible. For example, virtually all breeders gave their birds soaked seed and an abundance of green food in great variety. Some were in the fortunate position of being able to give fresh supplies of green food three times a day.

*Green food.*—It is interesting to note that the three varieties of green food most favoured were the same for all species—chickweed, dandelion heads, and sow-thistles. The order of preference, however, was different for the three most popular species. With Bullfinches the order was chickweed, dandelion, sow-thistle, with Goldfinches it was dandelion, sow-thistle, chickweed, and with Greenfinches, dandelion, chickweed, sow-thistle. Many other types of green food were used as well—groundsel, seeding grasses, shepherd's purse, knotgrass, cabbage, lettuce, knotweed, fat hen, and others.

*Live food.*—All breeders of Bullfinches and Chaffinches gave live food when the young were in the nest, and most Siskins and Redpolls were also given live food. Aphids (green and blackfly), ants eggs, mealworms, gentles, and small caterpillars were the varieties most commonly fed. Very few breeders of Goldfinches, Linnets, and Greenfinches (about 10 per cent of the total) gave their birds live food at all, though a certain number of insects may have been caught in the shrubs and on the grass growing in the aviaries.

*Soft food.*—Almost all breeders fed soft food of some sort, but there was no indication that any one type was more widely used than any other. Almost every breeder seemed to have his own special mixture, though a fair number used the formula recommended by Mr. Hylton Blythe. I was very interested in the soft food used by Mr. Alf Pritchard, which consisted of a mixture of sausage rusk and egg custard—1 cup rusk mixed with a custard made from 1 egg in ¼ pint milk. Theoretically, this is an excellent formula, and Mr. Pritchard used it successfully in rearing Goldfinches, Bullfinches, Greenfinches, Redpolls, and Linnets. Nutritionally, it is similar to red sponge cake, which is also an excellent rearing food.

More than half the Goldfinch breeders fed hard boiled eggs, but this was much less frequently fed to other species. Bread and milk was not uncommonly offered to all species. A number of breeders mentioned that they had to mix the soft food with maw and soaked seed before they could get the birds to eat it.

*Special notes on Greenfinches.*—Although virtually all breeders fed soaked seed, most of them fed hard seed as well. Many Greenfinch breeders lost a high proportion of their youngsters before the moult, but it is worthy of note that at least one breeder managed to get all his young safely through the moult by withholding hard seed until after the moult.

This loss of young Greenfinches at about 8 weeks of age through "going light" is certainly a very serious problem, and I think it would be a good thing if breeders experimented with various drugs in an attempt to combat this type of enteritis. The antibiotics aureomycin, penicillin, and terramycin are available in concentrated form from agricultural chemists for adding to pig and poultry foods, and I think it would be well worth while adding one or other of these antibiotics to the soft food at three or four times the level recommended by the makers right from hatching until the moult is over. (I recommend the higher level of dosing because soft food is unlikely to acount for more than ⅓ or ¼ of the dry-matter intake of the birds). Unfortunately it is not possible to buy these antibiotic supplements in small amounts, and breeders may find that they have to buy enough to mix a hundredweight or two of soft food!

An alternative suggestion I should like to make is that sulphamezathine (used against coccidiosis and other poultry diseases) be tried in the drinking water as soon as the young birds start going light. A veterinary prescription is needed for this drug and for other sulpha drugs which might be equally effective.

* * *

# LONDON ZOO NOTES

By J. J. Yealland

A Bittern picked up at Henham, Hertfordshire, was sent to the Gardens early in February. It was uninjured and appears not to be diseased, for it feeds readily and is so far doing well in the Waders' Aviary. Two birds new to the Collection have been presented; one, a White-browed Bulbul (*Pycnonotus luteolus*) by Mr. G. H. Newmark, who also gave a Crimson Finch, a Yellow-cheeked Titmouse, and a Golden-bellied Grosbeak, and the other, a Many-coloured Ground Finch (*Saltatricula multicolor*), brought from Buenos Aires together with a Black Tanager and another of the Golden-bellied Grosbeaks, by Mr. N. H. D. Moore.

The Bulbul is what Whistler describes as "a quiet inconspicuous bird, olive coloured above and paler below with a white eyebrow, found singly in gardens and scrub jungle". It is resident in Southern India and Ceylon. The Ground Finch is a native of Western Argentina and though it is many-coloured, the tints, even in the males, are very subdued.

Mr. M. Harris has presented a Crimson Finch and two Goldfinches that had been sent to him from Australia; Mr. J. R. Newmark, a pair of Rainbow Buntings and a Virginian Cardinal; Mrs. E. B. Hall-Smith, a Festive Tanager; Mons. P. Staner, a pair of Black-casqued Hornbills. A Cactus Conure, a White-winged and a Golden-winged Parrakeet, from Mr. A. A. Prestwich, and two Baikal and three Falcated Teal from Dr. K. C. Searle, complete the long list of recent gifts.

While bird watching in Essex, Mr. D. Wood found a Short-eared Owl unable to fly and covered in mud. He nursed it back to apparent good health, but, as so often happens in such cases, it did not long survive. This was a great disappointment, for this species would have completed our collection of British nesting Owls for which a range of new and palatial aviaries is nearing completion.

Three Grey-breasted Helmeted Guinea Fowl and three Common Pheasants have been received in exchange, and five more Black-footed Penguins have been hatched.

A Kagu presented by Mr. Ezra in 1941 has died and I wonder if we shall ever see another. As far back as 1930 Mr. Frank Finn in a letter to the Magazine, pointed out that this extremely interesting bird (the only member of the Sub-order Rhinocheti and confined to New Caledonia) was in danger of extinction because of the depredations of feral dogs, and he suggested that a number might be released on some safer island. Mr. Gerald Kirkham, who visited New Caledonia a few years ago, told me that the Kagu still existed in more remote parts, but that it was rapidly being exterminated by the dogs.

# BRITISH AVICULTURISTS' CLUB

The sixty-first meeting of the Club was held at the Rembrandt Hotel, Thurloe Place, South Kensington, on Monday, 10th March, 1958, following a dinner at 7 p.m.

Chairman : Miss P. Barclay-Smith.

Members of the Club : Miss J. Barnes, Miss K. Bonner, Major C. N. Clayden, Lt.-Col. H W. Clayden, W. D. Cummings, Sqn.-Ldr. C. Everitt, Mrs. C. Everitt, Miss R. M. Ezra, Mrs. O. L. Gent, F. Grant, H. J. Harman, L. W. Hill, Dr. E. Hindle, Miss E. M. Knobel, Miss M. H. Knobel-Harman, A. J. Lambert, E. C. Lewis, P. H. Maxwell, F. Mosford, G. S. Mottershead, S. Murray, Sir Crawford McCullagh, Bart., K. A. Norris, C. M. Payne, A. A. Prestwich, D. M. Reid-Henry, D. H. S. Risdon, S. Sanderson, R. C. J. Sawyer, J. L. Sears, D. Seth-Smith, H. A. Snazle, A. C. Soanes, Newton R. Steel, J. Thorpe, E. N. T. Vane, C. H. Wastell, Mrs. C. H. Wastell, Mrs. G. Wheatley, J. J. Yealland.

Members of the Club, 41 ; guests, 22 ; total, 63.

After the Loyal Toast the Chairman asked members to drink the health of Mr. David Seth-Smith and Mr. Jim Bailey, both of whom had celebrated their birthday the previous day.

The Chairman introduced Dr. Maurice Burton, Deputy Keeper of Zoology, British Museum (Natural History), and his daughter, Miss Jane Burton, who then showed their film " Anting Behaviour in Birds ".

D. M. Reid-Henry, E. N. T. Vane and J. J. Yealland took part in the discussion which followed.

Dr. Burton has kindly written the following summary of his discourse.

" Anting is now familiarly known to ornithologists as a trick of behaviour that has been recorded in a hundred species of birds. Typically, the anting attitude consists of the following : the bird picks up an ant in its bill, brings the wings outward and forward, curved as if shielding the front of the body, the tail is twisted to one side and slightly under the body, and the head is moved rapidly up and down inside one wing. This attitude varies slightly from time to time in the same individual, it varies in detail from one species to another, but the anting attitude is always recognizable as such, even if it has been on occasion confused with the sunbathing posture and certain forms of preening. It is possible to mistake sunbathing for anting, but once anting has been seen it can always be recognized and there is never any question of confusion with any other form of behaviour. Although, as the name implies, the behaviour was first observed with ants providing the stimulus, there are many records of other stimuli resulting in this behaviour. The list of substances so used includes a number of pungent and aromatic substances. Ant cocoons will induce anting, so will lemon

juice, apple peel, moth balls, wood ash, smoke from log fires or from household chimneys. Some birds, especially those belonging to the Corvidae, will ant with lighted cigarette-ends. This last has been recorded on a number of occasions.

Although the habit of anting has been set on record in the literature only within the last century or so, behaviour related to it has been recorded in the early literature. For example, in the *London Chronicle* it is stated that birds were seen carrying lighted coals in their beaks and setting thatched roofs on fire in the City of London. Pliny records the same thing for the thatched houses in Rome and in several books of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we are told that choughs, jackdaws and magpies were given to the same trick. Several birds in my aviaries have been seen to ant, using ants or cocoons, and also lighted cigarette-ends. One rook has this habit in an extreme form. Before it came into our possession it was known to ant in the smoke of an open log fire in the house of its owner, to perform similarly in front of a lighted electric stove, in the hot water from the tap in the kitchen, and in the steam from a teapot. It would try to turn on the hot-water tap by pecking at it, it has been known to break a number of teapot lids in its desire to use the steam from the contents of the teapot and it has been known to switch on the electric fire in order to ant in front of it. Like all members of the Corvidae, its insatiable curiosity combined with its pecking habits caused it to peck open a box of self-striking matches on one occasion and thereby to learn the trick of holding a match in one foot, pecking at the head with its beak and, when the match had been struck by this method, picking it up and go into the anting posture holding the lighted match under one wing. Since we have had this bird this trick has been demonstrated to visitors to our garden on a large number of occasions. Subsequently I set light to a heap of straw in the aviary to see whether the rook would carry the glowing embers away, as the birds mentioned in the ancient literature were said to have done. The rook did carry away burning embers of straw. It did not, however, ant with them on that occasion. At a later date, the same experiment was carried out with another rook in another aviary and this one, as soon as the straw was set on fire, danced to the burning heap and went into a vigorous anting posture, pecking at the flames and then passing the beak rapidly up and down inside one wing, or pecking at the smoke and behaving in the same way. The stimulus of the burning straw was so strong that once the rook had experience of anting in the flames the mere sight of a handful of straw or a lighted match were sufficient to put it into an excited state and to cause it to go into the anting posture. The appearance of the bird when anting on the flames was most spectacular and every now and then in the course of the performance it would hold a particular posture for a brief moment, with the wings outspread and the head turned to one

side, the flames apparently licking around its body. In this position it recalled very strongly the traditional picture of the phoenix.

Although this rook has anted on a heap of burning straw on a very large number of occasions, the maximum injury sustained has been a slight scorching of a patch of feathers on one side of the breast. During the course of the first few tests with it a slight smell of scorched feathers was noticeable but no scorching was perceptible to the eye. The appearance of the bird in action on the burning straw is such that it seems incredible that it does not suffer considerable harm from the flames. This immunity to the effect of fire is explainable in all probability on the following grounds :—

1. The beak fills with saliva, so that although the bird bites at the flames the moisture in the beak doubtless saves it from any harm ;
2. The nictitating membrane is drawn up over the eyes ; and
3. During the course of anting the forward vibrations of the wings produces a fanning action which probably keeps the flames just away from the body.

It is impossible at the moment to suggest a biological function for anting. There is some reason to suppose that the anting is an intensive form of preening, for many of the postures and actions seen in the course of anting closely resemble those seen in various forms of preening. It may be taken for certain that anting has nothing to do with a desire to be rid of parasites, as has been suggested on a number of occasions, nor has it anything to do with picking ants off the body that have fortuitously crawled on. Indeed, all the reasons given so far to account for anting can be readily negatived by even a few observations of the birds in action.

It has been suggested that anting may be the result of incarceration. This is usually coupled with the suggestion that it may be a displacement activity induced by boredom or loss of freedom and so on. That such suggestions are groundless is readily demonstrated by the fact that anting can be seen in wild birds."

The next meeting of the Club is on Monday, **12th May, 1958**.

ARTHUR A. PRESTWICH,
*Hon. Secretary.*

* * *

## THE SOCIETY'S MEDAL

In view of Mr. E. J. Boosey's letter in the January–February, 1958, number of the MAGAZINE, Council has cancelled the award of a Medal for breeding the Greater Hill Mynah (*Eulabes religiosa*) and has instead awarded one for breeding the Northern or Indian Grackle (*Gracula intermedia intermedia*).

ARTHUR A. PRESTWICH,
*Hon. Secretary.*

# NEWS AND VIEWS

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has shown considerable imagination in permitting eight Laysan Teal to be taken from Laysan Island and lodged in the Honolulu Zoo for propagation purposes.

* * *

Breeding reports, 1957. C. af Enehjelm, Helsingfors, nine Green-rumped Parrotlets. K. W. Greenway, three Rock Pebblers, thirteen Red-rumped, twenty Masked Lovebirds, about twenty-five Fischer's Lovebirds. D. Overländer, Bad Honnef/Rhein, three Pennant's Parrakeets.

* * *

Stephen Rebello, of Somerset, Massachusetts, has been awarded the Master Breeder's Award, 1957, the highest honour that can be bestowed on a member of the American Pheasant Society. This award is made in recognition of outstanding ability and skill in hatching and rearing rare pheasants. Jean Delacour made the presentation of the trophy.

* * *

The world population of the Whooping Crane is now thirty-one—the highest total since 1950. The latest report from the National Audubon Society says that twenty-six have returned from the wilds of Canada to their winter home at the Aransas refuge on the coast of Texas ; included in this number are four young birds.

* * *

Although this is a belated notice, it is thought that members will be interested to learn that *La Société Nationale d'Acclimatation de France* last year honoured two of our members. Professor Alessandro Ghigi, of Bologna, Italy, was awarded a *Grande Médaille Isidore Geoffroy Saint Hilaire*, and Dr. Raoul Castan, of Gabès, Tunis, a *Médaille d'argent.*

* * *

J. R. Van Oosten writes : " I thought you might be interested in learning that Mr. Melville M. Strann, of Northridge, California, bred the Green Imperial Pigeon several years ago when he lived in Sherman Oaks, California. As I remember, the pair reared one young one to maturity. They were housed in a planted aviary of fairly large size which they shared with a pair of Satyr Tragopan Pheasants."

* * *

Mrs. Ferne Hubbell, San Diego, reports : " Last year our Barnards reared five young ; Princess Alexandras, four ; Red Rosellas, three ; Alexandrines, two ; Cockatiels, two pied ; Scarlet Macaws, one. A near-success was with the Blue-headed Parrots (*Pionus menstruus*).

Two young were hatched, one died soon after hatching, but the other lived thirty-nine days. I think I kept it too warm. Plum-heads and Elegants hatched young but let them die."

* * *

D. F. Castle writes : " My most interesting breeding result last year was from a male Grey Singing Finch and a female Green Singing Finch. Two eggs were laid in an open nest-box and two young ones left the nest early in September. They looked slightly larger editions of their male parent but close inspection showed they had a yellowish tinge to the main wing feathers. I look forward to seeing how they moult out. The female went to nest again in September and three young were hatched from three eggs laid. Unfortunately, a cold night killed them when they were about three days old."

* * *

Charles P. Guy writes : " At the present moment we are engaged in a battle of wits with foxes and badgers. So far they have won, with three visits accounting for fourteen turkeys. Now I hear that a new menace has arrived higher up the river—mink—escapees from the fur farms that have bred wild. If any of our feminine members covet a coat, come to Devon and catch it ! We have three Buzzards and a pair of Kestrels that visit us most days, Carrion Crows, Magpies, and Jays are legion, yet the place swarms with small finches and softbills of all kinds, and wild pheasants come and crow against our ornamentals."

* * *

Last year L. A. Hadlow bred two Stanley × Red-rumped Parrakeet hybrids. This is an unusual cross, the previous records being E. J. Boosey, 1943, a young male which died before moulting into adult plumage : A. Gargan, of Dublin, 1944, five young, three males and two females, left the nest at the end of July, but one of each died in December ; 1945, five young were hatched but then, unfortunately, the Red-rumped died so the young were transferred to a Rosella with three young of her own. The young hybrids did well for a week, but as the Rosellas grew larger they were gradually trampled and only one survived. In 1950 D. G. Gibbs crossed a Stanley with a yellow Red-rumped, which union produced a single male "a very handsome fellow ".

A. A. P.

* * *

# REVIEW

ZOOGEOGRAPHY. The Geographical Distribution of Animals. By PHILIP J. DARLINGTON, Jr. Illustrated. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York ; Chapman and Hall, Ltd., London. 1957. Price 120*s*.

This is a monographic study devoted to the geographical distribution of vertebrates with special emphasis on the faunas of South America and Australia. Lists of families are given of existing land and freshwater vertebrates with their distribution, relevant fossil record, and other important information.

The geographical distribution of animals is of great importance in the study of evolution, and both Darwin and Wallace considered the pattern of distribution in undisturbed parts of the world as one of the proofs of their theory. The difficulty of explaining the distribution of mammals on the old theory of creation, had puzzled many of the earlier naturalists, and in the case of birds P. L. Sclater in 1857, inclined to a belief in the existence of separate centres of creation in different parts of the world.

Aviculturists will be specially interested in the chapter devoted to birds comprising 84 pages. Mayr and Amadon's classification is adopted and in the list of families the details of distribution are taken from Peters' (1931–1951) check list so far as it goes. It is obvious that the great power of movement of birds introduces a special difficulty in considering their ranges, but records of stragglers are omitted. The migrations of land birds are mentioned when they affect the limits or patterns of distribution in important ways, but very many details have had to be left out. The author, who is specially interested in birds, states that he finds their distribution a puzzling problem. There is a clear though complex pattern, but the processes that have produced this pattern—the evolution and dispersal of birds—are very difficult to trace and understand. There are few fossil birds and these are mostly fragmentary and of doubtful relationships. It might be supposed that because birds can fly their distribution would not be seriously affected by such easily crossed barriers as water gaps. But the facts are by no means so simple. There are several families of birds common in South and Central America which have never reached the West Indies, a very moderate water gap ; on the other hand other families have spread widely in these islands. It is not possible to tell from a bird's physical characteristics whether it is likely to cross water barriers. Rails seem to be very reluctant fliers, yet these more than any other non-marine birds have reached and populated the most remote oceanic islands. It is all the more surprising, therefore, that in general birds can be divided into

six distinct regional faunas which correspond with the ordinary geographical areas for other groups of vertebrates.

The geographical effects of bird migration are discussed in some detail, but it is emphasized that it is mainly a back and forth movement between summer breeding ranges in the north and wintering ranges further south. But although migration extends and complicates the distribution of many groups, the total effect of it is orderly, and birds are not scattered at random over the world. The main effect has been to increase relationships between tropical and north-temperate birds in each half of the world and to decrease relationships between the Old and New Worlds. In addition to the special consideration of the various groups of animals there is a general discussion of the climate and vegetation of the world, and an attempt to interpret the facts of distribution. The final chapter comprises an interesting survey of the probable history of the world during the last 200 million years, and of the geographical origin and history of man.

E. H.

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# NOTES

### The National Show

The 14th National Exhibition of Cage Birds and Aquaria was held at Olympia on 9th, 10th, and 11th January.

The variety of foreign birds was even better than in recent years and some of the species had probably not been shown in London before. Mr. Whitmore's Violet-eared Waxbills won in a good class of the rarer small seed-eaters and the Cardinal and Grosbeak class, a particularly interesting one, was headed by Mr. Sawyer's Black-throated Cardinals. It was pleasing to see Purple Grenadier Waxbills (P. and M. Baines) again—albeit with some difficulty, for the light was poor.

Birds of Paradise were represented by the winning pair of Twelve-wired (Sawyer) and a Red (Whitmore) that must have run them close. A fine Jamaican Streamer-tailed was easily the best of the Humming Birds and there was an excellent class of Sunbirds (won by Mrs. Draper's Tacazze) which included Golden-winged, Wedge-tailed, and the rare La Touche's from eastern Asia. There were some lovely Tanagers, both large and small, Mr. Anderdon's Blue-shouldered winning the one class and Mr. Scamell's Blue-crowned the other. A White-headed Bulbul was an interesting exhibit in the large Tanager, Shama, and Bulbul class.

A Loo Choo Robin (Sawyer) won the strongly supported class for Flycatchers, Robins, etc., and the same exhibitor's Swinhoe's Rock Thrush headed the Fruit-suckers, Thrushes, and Jay-Thrushes.

Rothschild's Grackle (Sawyer) was an easy winner in the Mynah class and some Californian Quail made attractive exhibits in their class, which was won by D. A. and J. E. Tack's Painted Quail.

Class 375 contained some nice Barbets and others, Mr. E. C. Lewis's White-breasted Kingfisher winning it. There were some interesting Honey-eaters and Flower-peckers among the small (insect, fruit, and nectar-feeding) birds, a Scarlet-backed Flower-pecker (Sawyer) winning while, in the corresponding class for the larger ones, the same exhibitor's Scarlet Cock-of-the-Rock was an outstanding winner, going on to gain the award for the best foreign bird and the National Supreme Trophy.

Philippine Hanging Parrots (Anderdon) won their class and the veteran Salawati King Parrakeet (Sawyer) once more gained the trophy for the best Parrot-like bird.

J. J. Y.

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# CORRESPONDENCE

## COMMON NAMES FOR RARE BIRDS

Your annotation about common names at the end of " London Zoo Notes " in the November-December Magazine raises an interesting point. Whatever the practice of horticulturists, aviculturists usually use an English name for any bird in their possession, and I do not think that I have ever heard a scientific name used when being shown round any member's aviaries. Certainly one should always quote, in brackets or italics, the scientific name of any bird one mentions in a scientific paper, but in ordinary speech *Epimachus meyeri bloodi* means just nothing at all. Rendered as the " Sickle-billed Bird of Paradise " we at least know it bears some family resemblance to the other Birds of Paradise with which we are familiar.

I only keep a modest collection myself, mostly common species such as *Psephotus haematonotus*, *Psittacus erithacus*, *Cardinalis cardinalis*, *Euplectes franciscana*, *Lagonosticta senegala*, and *Estrilda troglodytes* (and I wonder how many people who read this will know what I have?), but I am interested in a great number of birds that I can never hope to possess, and I do like, when reading the list of new additions to the Zoo, to have some idea of the kinds of birds they are, so that if there is anything that particularly interests me, I can look out for it on my next visit to the Gardens. From this point of view, the invention of English names would seem sensible and useful.

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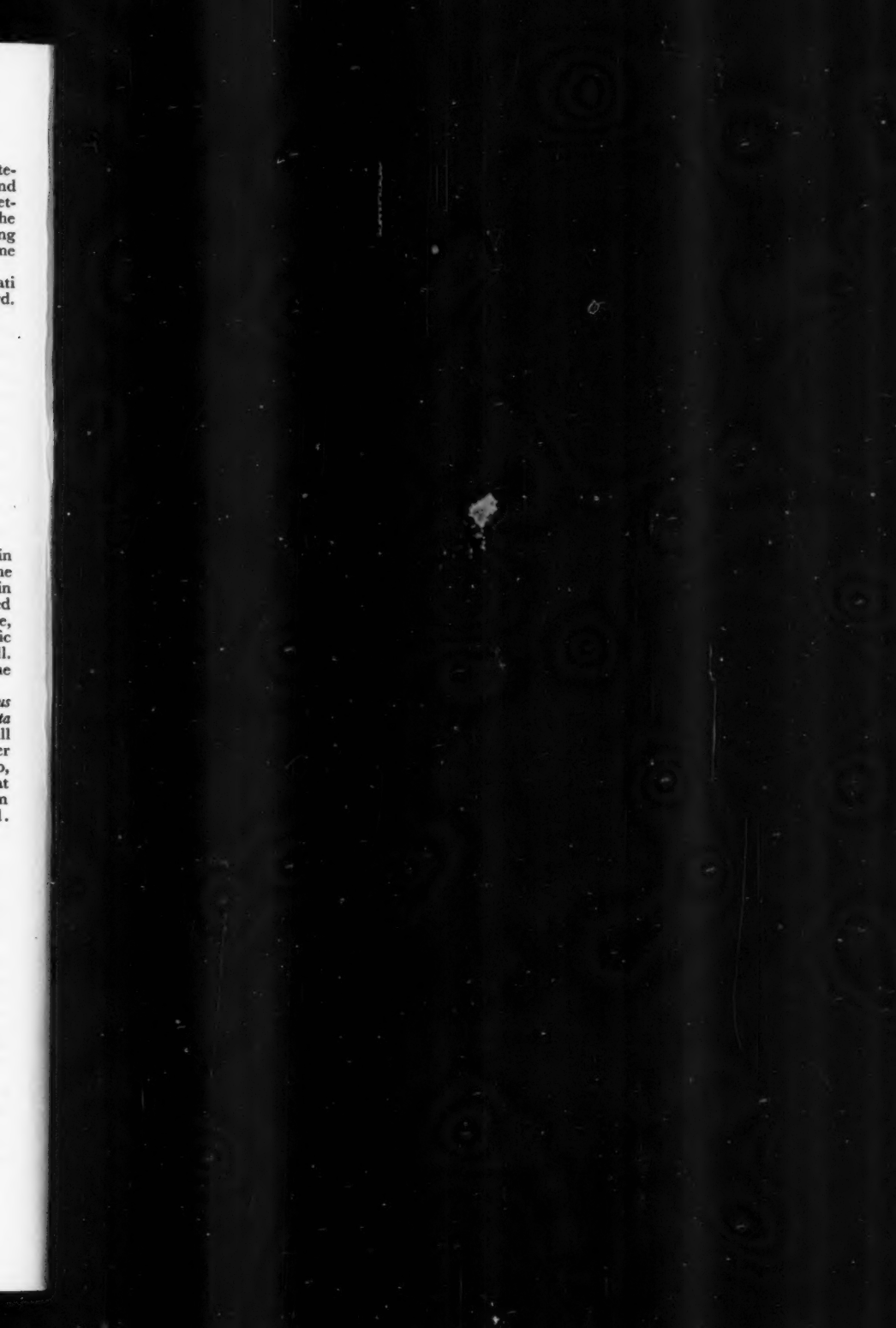

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